

# The Fire Fighter Gazette

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## Air Force wins big at DoD Fire and Emergency Services Training Conference

*By MSgt Michael. A. Ward  
Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency  
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The Air Force continued its domination of the DoD Fire and Emergency Services awards program, winning five out of six award categories for the second year in a row. Air Force firefighters won the top awards for military firefighter, military fire officer, civilian fire officer, fire department of the year and the heroism award. The awards were presented Aug 27 during the DoD Fire and Emergency Services Training Conference Awards Banquet in Dallas, Texas. The winners are:

SrA **Gregory White**, 86th Civil Engineering Group, Ramstein AB, Germany –DoD Military Firefighter of the Year.

MSgt **Michael Rosser**, 96th Civil Engineering Group, Eglin AFB, Fla. – DoD Military Fire Officer of the Year (Rosser has since been promoted to master sergeant and is now assigned to Kunsan AB, Korea). TSgt. Rosser is also the first DoD firefighter to win two DoD-level awards. In 1997, he received a DoD firefighter award while assigned to Rhein Main AB, Germany.

Ms **Cindy Litteral**, 21st Civil Engineer Squadron, Peterson AFB, Colo – DoD

Civilian Fire Officer of the Year.

The 18th Civil Engineer Group Fire Department, **Kadena AB**, Japan – DoD Fire Department of the Year.

Mr. **Robert Young**, Tinker AFB, Okla. – DoD Firefighter Heroism Award

Mr. Young received the heroism award for saving an 8-year old boy who had fallen into a farm pond. On Apr. 29, Young and another off-duty firefighter received a phone call from a neighbor who said the boy was missing and feared he may have fallen in the pond.

Despite water temperature estimated at about 45 degrees, they dove in and searched the pond. After a few minutes, Mr. Young located the boy, pulled him out of the water and administered CPR until emergency medical services members arrived. As EMS members loaded the boy in an air ambulance, they were able to detect a faint pulse; amazing since rescuers estimated the boy had been underwater for about 20 minutes. The child fully recovered and is home with his parents. Mr. Young was also awarded the Oklahoma State Medal of Valor by the state house of representatives.

The Army claimed the sixth DoD award when Ms Elizabeth Sweeney, Fort Monmouth, NJ, was named Civilian Firefighter of the Year. The Air Force nominee in this category was Mr. **Paul Wagner**, Ramstein AB, Germany.

*See related picture, Page 3*

Mr. Young received the heroism award for saving an 8-year old boy who had fallen into a farm pond.



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## SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>....A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

By **MSgt Gregory G. Noll**  
89th AW/CEF, Andrews AFB, MD

On Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>{2003}, will mark two years since the terrorist attacks on the United States. Approximately 3,000 people died that day, the largest number of war-related deaths on any single day since the Civil War. For many Lancaster County residents, this date will always have a special meaning. Some will remember their lost friends and loved ones; others will view it as a generational equivalent to December 7, 1941. And unfortunately, others will simply forget.

On September 11, 2001 at 12:15 PM, myself and approximately 80 other emergency responders left our homes and traveled to Harrisburg International Airport where PA Task Force 1, one of twenty-eight Federal urban search and rescue (USAR) teams, assembled in preparation for our response to the World Trade Center (WTC). We would remain in New York as part of the WTC rescue effort until September 19<sup>th</sup>. Those eight days forever changed how I now look at the world, our country, and my family.

There are certain images that I will always remember, and some that I cannot forget. People have told me that they just couldn't imagine what it was like. They talk about the images...the pictures...the video. But what they can't capture are the smells and the emotions of being there. Those eight days were an emotional roller coaster.

I remember every night when we left "The Pile" and traveled back to the Javits Center where the USAR Teams were housed. The streets were always lined with hundreds of people cheering our efforts. There were no dry eyes the first time, but we always knew and have never forgotten where the real heroes were located.

I remember several men and priests passing us one day as they left the site. Within seconds, one of the priests came back to us and introduced himself. It was Cardinal Edward Egan of the New York Diocese of the Catholic Church. He offered some very kind words and we all had a short prayer. He left referring to us as heroes...

I remember coming out of WTC Building 6 just as President Bush arrived on the site. I ended up about 50 yards away standing on top of a dump truck as he talked. We couldn't hear much from our distance, but then, we didn't have to. We have a saying in the emergency services that you can fool the spectators, but you can't fool the players. Before he came down to The Pile, President Bush met privately with the families of police and firefighters, and then with USAR Team members at the Javits Center. Politics aside, President Bush is a player who truly belonged

with us on West Street that day.

I remember that Saturday, September 15<sup>th</sup> was one of our better days. It was a clear, beautiful September day....you could see the F-16's and F-18's circling high above over Manhattan. We spent most of the day working on Tower 1, now a rubble pile 6 or 7 stories high. It was also the day where one of our search dogs, a golden retriever named Riley, made CNN and Life magazine. The Chief supervising our area asked if we could get a search dog up to our location, a request easier said than done. But 30 minutes later, after being hoisted above a 60 ft. ravine and then being passed person-to-person while sitting in a Stokes rescue basket, Riley was with us on the rubble pile at Tower 1. That day the bodies of two firefighters and a civilian were found in that area. It was a good day...

I remember the posters and the photographs of the civilians who were missing. The names and faces may have been different, but the words were always the same. Those showing missing parents with their kids were always the toughest. And while one could hope, nothing could change reality as the days passed.

I remember asking numerous FDNY firefighters "...How did your company make out?" The answers were rarely good. In the weeks and months that followed, I had conversations with FDNY friends who survived the collapse or who were off-duty. Firefighter Phil McArdle arrived on the scene just after Tower 2 had collapsed, and narrowly avoided being killed when Tower 1 fell. Of the 23 men who responded that day from his station, 20 were killed. Two months later, Phil's oldest son died in an auto accident.

Later that fall another good FDNY friend told me that given the increasing terrorism threat and the targeting of emergency responders, he accepted the fact that he would probably die on the job. I also had a similar feeling. Terrorism is not just a big city or a metropolitan problem – it is a war against all of us and everything that America represents. I also believe it is a fight worth dying for.

I remember coming home and seeing my wife and family. Words can't convey what I felt in my heart. In the end, it all comes back to family. I thought that I would be able to pick up where life was on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Eventually I did, but not until several weeks went past. Thankfully, my wife gave me time, space, and a strong shoulder when I needed it.

Several months ago I overheard a conversation where a woman said she was sick and tired of hearing about September 11<sup>th</sup>. She wished that both September 11<sup>th</sup> and Iraq would just go away...there

*(Continued on page 3)*

## SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>...

*(Continued from page 2)*

were so many other things that were more important in her world. Her comments have led me to this column.

With all due respect to that woman and similar opinions shared by others, the freedoms that we have in this country are due to the sacrifices that many men and women have made in our history, including those serving today in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places around the world. Personally, I will not forget. Rather, I vow to do everything in my power to ensure that others do not forget. Because here's the bottom line – 3,000 people were murdered on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 – not because they were black or white, ...Catholic, Muslim, Jewish or Protestant....but because they were Americans.

A day may come where I am ready to forgive - but I will never, ever forget.

## Dual Accreditation!

We are pleased to announce that the DoD Fire and Emergency Services Certification System is now accredited by both the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress and the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. Hats off and special thanks to Chief Hugh Pike, MSgt Craig Hall and the DoD Fire Academy Staff on their efforts to bring this milestone to fruition. As usual, the DoD Fire Academy staff put on a spectacular briefing and tour for the evaluators. They all truly demonstrate on a daily basis a level of professionalism that reflects positively on the Fire Service, the Air Force, and the Department of Defense. Thank you again and congratulations.

LAURENT R. McDONALD,  
SMSgt, USAF  
Fire Protection Career Field  
Manager  
HQ AFCEA/CEXF

Congratulations to the five Air Force winners at the DoD Level (L-R):

Mr. Robert Young  
SrA Gregory White  
CMSgt Gene Rausch  
MSgt Michael Rosser  
Ms. Cindy Litteral

## Regional Training

We have become aware that some DoD fire departments have developed cooperative agreements or contracts with commercial training providers and provide training and certification to not only their own, but to other DoD fire fighters. At the conclusion of the training, IFSAC or Pro-Board certificates are issued that are then submitted for acceptance into the DoD FFCS via reciprocity. While we applaud your efforts to assist with training and certification, we are concerned that some installations are calling themselves "a regional training academy" or some similar terms that imply the facility is sanctioned by corporate DoD. We ask that these facilities not be called a DoD Training Academy or any similar title. Later this month, I will be presenting the plan to "transform DoD training and certification." The goal of the transformation is to export DoD training (that leads to certification) from the DoD Fire Academy to "Satellite" training sites closer to you, the customer. The details of the transformation are much too complex to fully explain here, but I will produce the entire plan to you after I formally present it to the Air Education and Training Command representatives later this month. We are working hard to make DoD fire training more accessible to you, timelier, and with much greater efficiency. Current DoD training is spectacular - non better. We want it to be available to you when you need it. You will have opportunities to host a satellite at your location if you so desire. Stay tuned. Thanks for your attention on this very important matter.

DONALD W. WARNER, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)  
Chief, Air Force Fire Emergency Services



## Liquid Propane Aircraft Fire Training Facility Multimedia Training Course

### SYNOPSIS:

This A-Gram announces the availability of a new multimedia Liquid Propane Aircraft Fire Training Facility (AFTF) training course.

### COURSE DETAILS:

This course is designed to provide AFTF operators with the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure firefighter safety and to provide bases with proper AFTF inspection, operation, and maintenance guidelines. The course also teaches operators how to safely configure the training mock-up to simulate various aircraft fires. The goal is to illustrate effective, environmentally safe methods for teaching firefighters tactics, strategies, and agent application techniques. The course follows operation and field-level maintenance instructions specified in Technical Order 35E1-2-13-1, Operation and Maintenance Instruction Manual, Aircraft Fire Training Facility.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This multimedia training course uses a videotape and/or CD-ROM to present materials in a wide variety of media formats, including full motion video, text, audio, and graphics. The course contains 11 training modules. Each module covers specific topics that take three to five minutes each to complete. Course modules are: Overview, Duties and Responsibilities, Pre-Exercise Inspection, Pre-Exercise Set Up, Training Exercises, Emergency Procedures, System Shutdown and Cleanup, Winterization and De-Winterization Procedures, Quarterly System Safety Inspections, and General Maintenance requirements. Students completing this course are qualified as AFTF operators and will receive the training certificate shown above.

### FEATURES AND BENEFITS:

This course standardizes training across the Air Force and enables installations to always have qualified AFTF operators. It can be presented to a group in a classroom setting or taken individually. The CD-ROM version allows students to review specific training areas.

### CERTEST COMPUTER-BASED FINAL EXAM:

To become a certified operator, students are required to take a 50-question final exam after completing the course. The final exam has been added to the CerTest (Version 5.0) computer-based testing program and is located under the Pit Fire Training Area. The test number is 352.

### HOW TO BECOME CERTIFIED:

(1) Obtain copies of the courseware. (2) Complete the course. (3) Take the CerTest computerbased end-of-course exam and pass with a minimum score of 80 percent. (4) Submit a cover letter signed by the Fire Chief requesting a training certificate to HQ AFCEA/CEXF, 139 Barnes Drive, Ste 1, Tyndall AFB FL 32403-5319. Be sure to include the student's full name and attach a copy of the CerTest results.

### TRAINING REQUIREMENT:

The requirement to complete this training will be established in an official message and added to the next revision of AFI 32-2001, Fire Protection Operations and Fire Prevention Program.

POC: Tom Seaman, DSN 523-6155

## Fire Fighter Protective Gear Report

Here's a hot link to a report that you and your bases may find helpful:

Fire Fighters Protective Ensemble. "Risk Assessment of Using Firefighter Protective Ensemble (FFPE) with Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for Rescue Operations During a Terrorist Chemical Agent Incident" June 2003.

[http://hld.sbcom.army.mil/downloads/mirp/ffpe\\_scba\\_rescue\\_ops.pdf](http://hld.sbcom.army.mil/downloads/mirp/ffpe_scba_rescue_ops.pdf)

## Major General Norma E. Brown

Retired Maj. Gen. Norma E. Brown, the Air Force's first female wing commander, died July 22, 2003. She was 77.

The Madison, Fla., native entered the Air Force as a second lieutenant in December 1951. Her first assignment was as chief of military personnel for Flight Service headquarters in Washington, D.C. She spent much of her career in the Air Force Security Service working in a series of personnel assignments. In December 1974, she became the first woman to command an Air Force wing when she assumed command of the 6940th Security Wing at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. Later she became deputy chief of staff for manpower and personnel for the Air Force Logistics Command. She retired Aug. 1, 1982, as the commander of Chanute Technical Training Center, Chanute AFB, Ill. Following her retirement, she settled in Leon Springs, Texas, just north of San Antonio. Among her military decorations were the Distinguished Service Medal and the Legion of Merit. Upon retirement, she became the first woman inducted into the Order of the Sword, an honor bestowed by Air Force noncommissioned officers to commissioned officers and civilian leaders who have made significant contributions to the enlisted corps.



## Nature's Fury...

Here are two photos taken after Hurricane Isabel moved through Langley AFB...the bottom photo is the HQ ACC building.





## Pictures

Maj Gen Fox (The Air Force Civil Engineer) and CMSgt Jim Podolske share a light-hearted moment (below) at the Air Force recognition luncheon at the DoD Fire Conference in Dallas, TX.



SSgt Mark Cornell, the accreditation manager for the Elmendorf AFB fire department, attended a recognition dinner at the fire conference in Dallas to receive formal recognition of their accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

The Fire Fighter Combat Challenge is rapidly coming to a close for this year, as the World Championship will be held in Ottawa on 8 November. SSgt(s) Kory Cofer and SSgt(s) Anthony "Tank" McMurtry (below) compete in a regional championship for Team USAFA (Air Force Academy) in Castle Rock, CO. Dave Chiodo (right) waits for his turn to run the challenge course in El Paso, TX. Chiodo is a civilian firefighter at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., and at age 50 is the oldest member of Team Travis. Both teams, as well as the "SAM Squad" (DoD Fire Academy) and RAF Mildenhall, will be competing in Ottawa this year.



## Snippets...

Good Morning Everyone

I wanted to share some good news with each of you. The civilian personnel office contacted me today and told me I was selected to fill a GS-12 position here at AFCESA and I accepted the position. I retire from the Air Force on 24 Oct 03 and I start my civil service career on 16 Nov 03 when the civilian pay period begins. Needless to say, I am an extremely happy camper.

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Good Afternoon Respected Air Force Colleagues:

I wanted to let you know that after a great deal of thought and consideration, my family and I have decided to retire after 21 years of service. I have projected for a 1 March 2004 retirement date. We arrived at this difficult decision based on circumstances in our personal lives as well as health issues with family members.

I also want to express my heartfelt thanks for the support, camaraderie, fellowship, and friendship you have given me over my career in general, and the last two years in particular. It has been an honor for me to serve as your Career Field Manager and to be associated with people who have worked faithfully and diligently to build the world's best air and space firefighting force. Together as a community we've been able to accomplish great things. You all exemplify on a daily basis our motto, the desire to serve, the ability to perform, and the courage to act. I am proud to serve with such distinguished and committed professionals. I have had a wonderful career far beyond my expectations and I have many of you to thank for it. Because of your willingness to sacrifice and your unfailing efforts, our firefighters, Air Force, and nation are safe from the perils of our sometimes uncertain world. Best wishes to each of you for success in the future.

Very Respectfully,

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### **DOD HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (HAZMAT) CERTIFICATION PROGRAM UPDATE:**

We are updating the HAZMAT awareness, operations and technician multimedia training courses to correspond with the current edition of the National Fire Protection Association 472, *Standard on Professional Qualifications for Hazardous Materials Emergency Responders*. These updated courses, along with a new *HAZMAT Train-the-Trainer* support material CD, will be released during the first quarter of CY 04. As a side note, the DOD Fire and Emergency Services Certification Program reached a significant milestone on 1 Oct 03. Since the program became accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress in Aug 94, more than 100,000 certification certificates have been issued. (CMSgt Podolske, DSN 523-6321)

### **NEW FIREFIGHTER I CERTIFICATION COURSE:**

The new *Firefighter I* certification course has been developed and submitted to the Air Force Institute for Advanced Distributed Learning for their review, approval and activation. The course numbers are 10011 (paper-based final exam) and 10011G (computer-based final exam). This course will replace course numbers 3E731 and 3E731G, respectively. When approved, a message will be published announcing its availability. DOD fire and emergency services certification courses are free to DOD components, the Coast Guard, DOD contractors and Veterans Administration fire departments. (MSgt Hall, DSN 523-6221)

Students at the DoD Fire Academy train to properly extinguish a helicopter fire. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Jack Braden)





## Offutt AFB to receive a new fire station

Eight years after the initial request was submitted for the fire station, members of the Offutt community gathered to witness the first step in the project that is expected to be completed by February 2005.

"This was the highlight of my career today," said Fire Chief Robin Gullie, after the groundbreaking ceremony. "It's hard to believe. We had our hopes up in 2001 thinking (the Fire-Crash Rescue Station) was going to be built, but it didn't happen." Gullie, one of 75 civilian and military firefighters assigned to Offutt, started work on the fire station project in 1995. "We initiated a work order, then had to do a site approval," Gullie said. "After that, the wing commander listed it as a number one military construction project, where it has stood for several years." The new 40,000-square-foot building will cost approximately \$10.8 million. "It will be one of the largest fire stations in the Air Force," Gullie said. "The average in the Air Force right now is around 32,000-square-feet." Congressman Lee Terry and other political representatives have supported the construction of a new fire station throughout their terms in office, citing it as a necessary project. "Offutt's missions are vital to national defense, and responding to any emergencies on the base is a high priority," Terry said. "A new Fire-Crash Rescue Station is a necessity from military and safety standpoints. It's one of those cases where persistence on a very worthwhile project pays off." The current fire station is a converted hangar that houses only 14 of Offutt's 20 emergency vehicles. The new location will house all the emergency vehicles and provide additional benefits. "One side of the fire station will be accessible to the flight line and the other will be accessible to the public," Gullie said. "We'll also be centrally-located, which means we'll have quick access to the entire base." The Fire-Crash Rescue Station will provide firefighters with comfortable living spaces, too. "In a one-year period, firefighters spend an average of about six months at the fire station," Gullie said.

Fire Chief Robin Gullie (far left) at the ground breaking ceremony on September 10th. An artist's rendering of the project is below.





## Iraqi firefighters at Baghdad airport get training from Guardsmen

By Jason Chudy, Stars and Stripes European Edition, Thursday, October 2, 2003

BAGHDAD, Iraq - First steps are being taken at Baghdad International Airport so it can regain its place as the country's commercial aviation hub. Exactly when civilian jets will land, however, is still up in the air. In preparation for the day when the airport reopens to commercial traffic, two Air National Guard firefighters are retraining 85 of their Iraqi civilian counterparts in 10 days of hands-on training. The experience of the Iraqi firefighter's ranges from one to 26 years, said Staff Sgt. Clem McLaughlin, assigned to the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 111th Fighter Wing. And although the students served as airport firefighters, they've got lot to relearn, McLaughlin said. "Unfortunately, [there was] no hands-on training," McLaughlin said. "Every one of these 40 hours is solid hands-on training. Everything we're doing, we're either demonstrating it or they're touching it. "Their prior experience they had pretty much all got from reading books, not even from a class." As Keith Wheatley, the airport's acting fire chief, explained, "They know the layout, they know where the water sources are, they know the airfields, your runways, your taxiways." Some, however, do have previous schooling: They attended a civil aviation school in Lebanon in the 1980s. But none of the firefighters ever received further training, or even put their training into use. "Some of the comments made to me by some of the Iraqi firefighters are that for 30 years under Saddam, no training and no equipment," said Master Sgt. John Mallott of the Missouri ANG's 131st Fighter Wing. The fourth and final group of Iraqi firefighters started their refresher training this week. A team from South Carolina's Shaw Air Force Base taught the first class, but Mallott and McLaughlin have taught the final three. They train outside the airport's main terminal, using abandoned Iraqi Airways jets as mobile classrooms. McLaughlin and Mallott work with Raad al-Khalil, who will become airport fire chief when it returns to civilian control, to create the day's training program. "We'll get together, lay out the program for the day and make sure Raad understands it," McLaughlin said. "All John and I have to do is guide them through it." The instructors have a broad level of experience. McLaughlin is a captain with the Philadelphia Fire Department and served as a staff instructor with the Philadelphia Fire Academy. Mallott has been the fire chief in Kennett, Mo., for 14 years. He also teaches firefighting skills to departments throughout the state for the University of Missouri. "This is similar to working with a lot of small fire departments [in the United States] that have limited equipment," Mallott said. "They have a desire and they have the zeal to become a professional firefighter for their community. I see that in the Iraqi firefighters." "We started off with an introduction to basic firefighting," McLaughlin said after their second four-hour training session. "We rolled into crew drills here on the aircraft, where they learn fundamentals of aircraft con-

struction, learn to gain access into aircraft, the various hazard areas of the aircraft." Parked around Baghdad's terminal are about a half-dozen aircraft of the former Iraqi national airline, ranging from small jets to a 747. Wheatley said that the different aircraft types give the students a broad range of training scenarios. "We're going to pull the 747 and the IL-76 on the runway," Wheatley said. "Set them babies up and bingo, we're ready to go." Despite the benefit of real aircraft, the Iraqi firefighters were lacking in some basic firefighting equipment, Wheatley said. "All the equipment down there was like 1940s vintage stuff," he said. "Most of it went to the dump; pumps were blown, axles busted off. You name it, it was wrong." Wheatley works for Skylink, a company subcontracted by the U.S. Agency for International Development to rebuild Iraq's airport infrastructure. For the Iraqi firefighters, this means new equipment and renovated facilities, plus a sense of pride. "We've accomplished something," McLaughlin said. "Personally, it's seeing them regain their pride as firefighters. I feel good about interacting with the Iraqi firefighters and letting them know that Americans ... are coming here and helping them get on track. "We've got good relations with the Air Force," al-Khalil said. "Everybody is kind with us and this is good practice. It's practical." The group will graduate Oct. 23.

## HAZMAT Program receives national-level awards

I wanted to pass on the good news and thank everyone for their hard work and support on this project. Congratulations are in order for our HazMat multi-media development team! The HazMat IC project won two silver Absolute Excellence in Electronic Media (AXIEM) Awards for interactive media in a national market in the following categories:

- 1 - Training
- 2 - Graphics/Logos

The AXIEM award recognizes excellence in electronic media. It is a national award that looks for a standard of creative communication and production excellence in electronic media. Entries were judged on their own merits against an absolute standard established for that particular medium, market, and category. Entries do not compete against one another. Although we do not yet have the breakout of how many entries were submitted, we do know that entries were received from all 50 states and several countries. Once again, congratulations on a job well done! CMSgt Podolske

## Need a Technical Order?

"I don't have the fire truck tech orders on a CD or disk." You might be able to extract them from the system that WR uses called CENTRA. You have to have an account to access the CENTRA computer system but all you need to get that is a ".mil" address.

Try this and see if it works...

<https://wwwmil.robins.af.mil/>

That gets you into the basic Robins AFB web site. Then look on the left hand column on the screen. Towards the bottom of the column, find "Technical Orders" and click on that.

In the middle of the next screen, click on "Central Technical Order Repository" to get into what is lovingly called the CENTRA system. You need an account to use this system, but if you don't have one, the screen will ask if you already have an account. If not, click on "no" so you can set up an account. Once you get an account established (you have to have a ".mil" address to use this system), then when you go into this screen you click on "yes" where it asks if you have an account. Then, it takes you to the screen to enter your user ID and password.

CENTRA is not user friendly. Sometimes you double-click on things to get them to open up, but other times you have to click on little icons. But if you're persistent, the system does actually work. It doesn't just contain fire truck tech orders; a lot of the general purpose vehicles and other special purpose manuals are also in this system. A lot of our fire truck technical orders are loaded into this electronic system. Mind you, in order to look things up, you have to know what the technical order (T.O.) number is. If all else fails, they have a "help" desk for CENTRA at DSN 468-7450.

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## Thrift Savings Plan

Just a reminder that the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season begins October 15th and runs through the end of this year. To enroll or change your contribution amount, you must file a contribution election with your agency or service. Use the TSP Election Form TSP-1 if you are a civilian employee, or TSP-U-1 if you are a member of the uniformed services. Or, if your agency or service requires it, use the appropriate automated system, such as Employee Express, PostalEASE, or MyPay. Check with your agency or service TSP representative if you have questions about the procedure for filing your contribution election.

## Pension Protection

Federal employees who are injured on the job will be able to breathe a little easier because of a new law recently passed by Congress and signed by President Bush. Inspired by Mrs. Louise Kurtz, a civilian employee severely injured during the September 11th attack on the Pentagon, the law changes the way a federal employee's benefits are calculated during a disability by increasing the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) benefit to cover any shortfall. Before the law was enacted, injured or disabled federal employees covered by FERS could have faced a shortfall in their pensions after suffering an on-the-job injury because they were unable to pay into Social Security or the federal Thrift Savings Plan while collecting workers' compensation payments. The new law corrects this problem by increasing the usual FERS Defined Benefit of 1 percent of an employee's pay to 2 percent for the duration of the disability. This keeps the accrual of an employee's retirement benefits in line with what they would have been had the individual not been injured. The House bill was sponsored by Representative Jo Ann Davis (R-Virginia). Senator George Allen (R-Virginia) sponsored companion legislation, which passed the Senate in July. The measure is Public Law No. 108-92.

Air Force Academy Fire Department members bring down a victim of a fall on 10 Oct 03. The retired colonel fell and broke her ankle, and fire fighters hiked a mile and a half, up 1000' elevation to reach the victim.

